

COMICS' BRONZE AGE AND BEYOND!

# BACKISSUE!

September 2014  
No. 75  
\$8.95



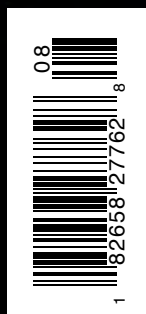
Dive into  
the history of  
Paul Chadwick's

## Concrete

### '80s INDEPENDENTS!

• Dave Sim's *Cerebus the Aardvark*  
• Richard & Wendy Pini's *Elfquest*  
• Indies on Screen & more  
with Denis Kitchen • Trina Robbins • David Scroggy

Concrete TM & © Paul Chadwick. All Rights Reserved.



Volume 1,  
Number 75  
September 2014

**Celebrating  
the Best  
Comics of  
the '70s, '80s,  
'90s, and Beyond!**

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Michael Eury

**PUBLISHER**  
John Morrow

**DESIGNER**  
Rich Fowlks

**COVER ARTIST**  
Paul Chadwick

**COVER DESIGNER**  
Michael Kronenberg

**PROOFREADER**  
Rob Smentek

**SPECIAL THANKS**

Bud Alligood	Stacey Kitchen
Chuck Alligood	Alan Light
Brook Anthony	Deni Loubert
Roger Ash	David Miller
Mike Baron	Dennis Miller
Alex Boney	Mike Richardson
Jerry Boyd	Trina Robbins
Tim Brown	Patrick Rosenkranz
Paul Chadwick	Mark Schultz
Dark Horse Comics	David Scroggy
Steve Ditko	Dave Sim
Jo Duffy	Anthony Snyder
Harlan Ellison	
Jackie Estrada	
Stuart Fischer	
Gerhard	
Grand Comics	
Database	
Heritage Comics	
Auctions	
Rand Holmes	
Denis Kitchen	

**BACK ISSUE**  
Comics' Bronze Age and Beyond!



**1980s  
INDEPENDENTS  
ISSUE**

**BACK SEAT DRIVER: Editorial by Michael Eury** ..... 2

**FLASHBACK: The Life and Death of Cerebus the Aardvark** ..... 3  
*A close look at Dave Sim's trailblazing, long-running series*

**PRO2PRO: ElfQuest Behind the Scenes: A Chat with Richard and Wendy Pini** ..... 23  
*How the husband-and-wife team crafted a fantasy classic from the ground up*

**BEYOND CAPES: There's a Rattler in Your Kitchen Sink, Man** ..... 39  
*An overview of Death Rattle, with Baron, Ellison, Holmes, Kitchen, and Schultz*

**OFF MY CHEST: Pacific Comics Memories by David Scroggy** ..... 45  
*A guest editorial recalling Pacific's growth from retail shop to publisher—and a look at Steve Ditko's "Stickman"!*

**FLASHBACK: Stone Skin, Human Heart: Paul Chadwick's Concrete** ..... 49  
*From the banner year of 1986 emerged this dark horse hit*

**BEYOND CAPES: Katy, Trina, and the California Girls** ..... 64  
*Behind the scenes of Trina Robbins' reader-participation comic*

**BACKSTAGE PASS: 1980s Independents: From Print to Screen** ..... 68  
*From Bucky O'Hare to The Tick, these indies made it to Hollywood*

**BACK TALK** ..... 75  
*Reader reaction to our Hulk issue (#70) and more*

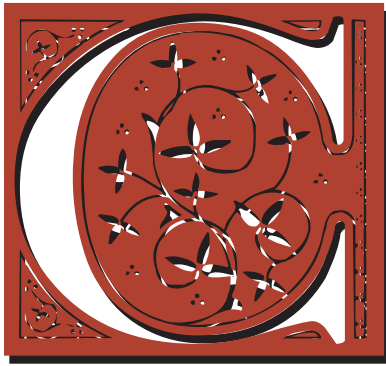
**If you're viewing a Digital Edition of this publication, PLEASE READ THIS:**

This is copyrighted material, **NOT** intended for downloading anywhere except our website or Apps. If you downloaded it from another website or torrent, go ahead and read it, and if you decide to keep it, **DO THE RIGHT THING** and buy a legal download, or a printed copy. Otherwise, **DELETE IT FROM YOUR DEVICE** and **DO NOT SHARE IT WITH FRIENDS OR POST IT ANYWHERE**. If you enjoy our publications enough to download them, please pay for them so we can keep producing ones like this. Our digital editions should **ONLY** be downloaded within our Apps and at [www.twomorrows.com](http://www.twomorrows.com)

Available on the App Store | ANDROID APP ON Google play

**BACK ISSUE™** is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows Publishing, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614. Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief. John Morrow, Publisher. Editorial Office: **BACK ISSUE**, c/o Michael Eury, Editor-in-Chief, 118 Edgewood Avenue NE, Concord, NC 28025. Email: euryman@gmail.com. Six-issue subscriptions: \$67 Standard US, \$85 Canada, \$104 Surface International. *Please send subscription orders and funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial office.* Cover art by Paul Chadwick. Concrete TM & © Paul Chadwick. All Rights Reserved. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © 2014 Michael Eury and TwoMorrows Publishing. **BACK ISSUE** is a TM of TwoMorrows Publishing. ISSN 1932-6904. Printed in China. **FIRST PRINTING.**

All covers and related characters TM & © their respective copyright holders.



# The Life and Death of CEREBUS the aardvark

by Roger Ash

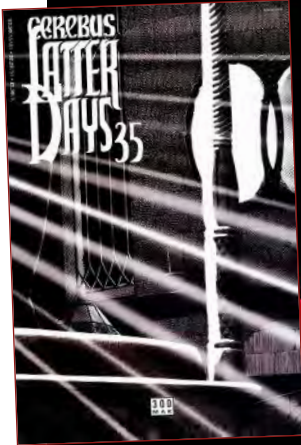
COLLECTOR'S EDITION



CEREBUS  
THE AARDVARK DEC.

No.1

DEC.



FIRST ISSUE

## A 24-Year Saga

The beginning and end of Dave Sim's *Cerebus the Aardvark*, comics' longest-running independent title: issue #1 (Dec. 1977–Jan. 1978), signed by its creator, and (inset) #300 (Mar. 2004).

Cerebus TM & © Dave Sim.

Dave Sim, his girlfriend Deni Loubert, and Deni's brother and sister, Michael and Karen, set out to make a fanzine called *Cerberus*. They decide to publish their fanzine under the Aardvark-Vanaheim banner, combining the suggestions of Aardvark Press and Vanaheim Press. Sim drew an aardvark mascot and designed the logo, but the fanzine never made it to print. After noticing that Deni misspelled Cerberus as Cerebus, Sim decided that was the name of the aardvark.

"It was a small step from this point to penciling a page of Cerebus bouncing merrily atop a horse (yay) and sending it to Mike Friedrich as a new feature for *Quack* [a funny-animal anthology], which he was quick to refuse (boo)," wrote Sim in the introduction of *Swords of Cerebus vol. 1*.

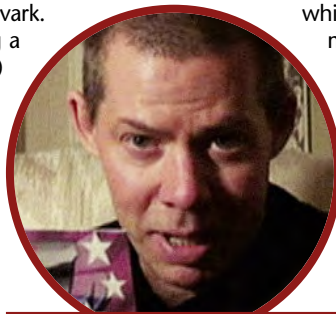
This was the setup that led to the publication of *Cerebus* #1 (Dec. 1977–Jan. 1978). I asked Sim as part of a self-publishing roundtable in 1995 why he decided to self-publish *Cerebus*. "Largely because I was in that category of third-, fourth-, or fifth-string freelancer with a lot of the (as we called them at the time) 'ground level' comics: *Star\*Reach* being the foremost 'ground level' publisher. And it did occur to me that perhaps I should make an effort to put something down on my own and see what kind of success I could have with that. The very worst that would happen is that I would end up with some more published samples of my work exactly the way that I

wanted them to look and exactly what I wanted in terms of content." (*Worlds of Westfield*, Nov. 1995)

The early issues of *Cerebus* are parodies of the sword-and-sorcery genre, with the Roy Thomas/Barry Windsor-Smith issues of Marvel's *Conan the Barbarian* as a major influence. The early issues also included essays called "The Aardvarkian Age" by Michael Loubert, which looked at the world of *Cerebus*. The first issue features many of the tropes one expects to see in sword-and-sorcery stories: the barbarian thief, the bar fight, the betrayal by your partners, and the epic battle with a mystical foe. However, seeing these things carried out by an aardvark is quite ridiculous.

There were a few things introduced in the first issue that would stay around for the rest of the series, the most obvious being Cerebus speaking in the third person. Second is the term "earth-pig," which is used interchangeably with "aardvark." (Earth-pig is the meaning of the Afrikaans word from which we get aardvark.) Finally, while Cerebus is the protagonist of the book, that does not mean he's the hero. He can be just as amoral as those he

fights against. His motivations usually stem from what's best for him. I'm going to be discussing story elements in *Cerebus*, so if you plan to read it and don't want to know what happens, go read it first and come back. I'll wait.



DAVE SIM

## The Eye of Turim and the Duck of Gerber

(left) Page 14 of *Cerebus* #2 (Feb. 1978).

(right) Sim's aardvark meets Marvel's Howard the Duck in this 1981 fanzine illustration.

Courtesy of Anthony Snyder ([www.anthonys-comicbookart.com](http://www.anthonys-comicbookart.com)).

Cerebus TM & © Dave Sim.  
Howard the Duck TM & ©  
Marvel Characters, Inc.

## FAMILIAR FACES (SORT OF)

Issue #3 (Apr.–May 1978) introduces the first of the major supporting characters in *Cerebus*, Red Sophia, a parody of Thomas and Windsor-Smith's Red Sonja. Sophia's father is the sorcerer Henrot, who looks like artist Frank Thorne, who is considered by many fans to be the seminal Red Sonja artist. In fact, Henrot is an anagram of Thorne.

The fourth issue (June–July 1978) introduces one of the most popular characters in the series, Elrod of Melvinbone, a parody of Michael Moorcock's Elric of Melniboné. While Elrod looks like Elric, he has the personality of Warner Bros.' loudmouthed rooster, Foghorn Leghorn. Elrod's self-important and blustery personality always seems to land him and *Cerebus* in a fix.

These issues marked the first two times Sim used characters that were based on other characters, something that would continue through the run of the book. "Characters who are based on other characters in *Cerebus* tend to be the easiest to write," Sim wrote in the introduction to #4 in *Swords of Cerebus* vol. 1. "Once you catch the rhythm of their speech, you're halfway home to the kind of interaction that sells comic books."

While Sim was working on *Cerebus*, Loubert was working in the office. "As the business side of the company, I handled everything that wasn't actually involved with creatively producing the titles," she recalls. "In the beginning, it was simply helping Dave get the book to the printers, shipping the books to our initial distributors Phil Seuling and Bud Plant, and paying the bills. As time progressed, that got more complicated. It involved developing a marketing plan; negotiating with distributors; talking to foreign-language publishers and any other secondary markets that approached us about *Cerebus*; planning for trade shows, conventions, and signings; or anything else that needed to be done. If it was going to take Dave away from the creative work of writing and drawing *Cerebus*, then it was my job to take care of it. It also meant that sometimes Dave came to me with an idea for something he wanted to do, and I had to figure out how we would do it."

The fifth issue (Aug.–Sept. 1978) continues to round out *Cerebus*' universe with the introduction of the Picts. When a scouting party discovers *Cerebus*, they are amazed and insist on taking him to their leader, Bran Mac Muffin, which is a nod to Robert E. Howard's Bran Mac Morn. *Cerebus* soon learns why the Picts were surprised when they found him when he sees a statue of their coming god-king—an aardvark.

The following issue introduces a character who would become the most popular supporting character in the series, as well as a potential love interest for *Cerebus*: Jaka. A pair of thieves believes *Cerebus* has information they require. They take him to a bar, drug him, and attempt to get the information from him when the drug takes effect. Unfortunately for them, *Cerebus* instead falls under the spell of the dancer at the bar, Jaka. Eventually the drug wears off, and *Cerebus* has no memory of Jaka or their evening together.

Aside from fleshing out *Cerebus*' world, Sim had been making another change in the book: the look of *Cerebus* himself. In the first issue, *Cerebus* looked a bit



gangly with a very long snout. He was wearing a horned helmet and medallions. As the series progressed, Cerebus' snout became much shorter and his body became stockier. While the medallions remained, the helmet disappeared after issue #3. He gained his signature vest in issue #4. There was a big change in issue #7:

"This issue is my first radical departure from my intention to be a major Barry Smith sequel—the cross-hatching on the splash page," wrote Sim in the introduction to #7 in *Swords of Cerebus* vol. 2. "I was trying to find a Barry Smith-style texture that would allow me to render the webbing in two different shades. I broke down and did tight-weave cross-hatching even though Smith never used it.

"Suddenly I was free."

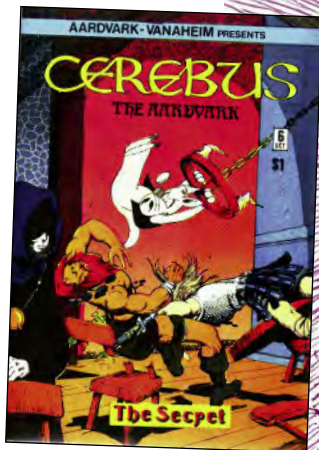
In this issue, which features a cover by Frank Thorne, Cerebus is on his way to the Temple of the Black Sun to find a treasure when he runs into Elrod. The cult of the Black Sun is very dangerous, so keeping Elrod quiet so they don't get noticed is important, but a fool's errand. Important to Cerebus' future is that the nameless god of the Black Sun is an aardvark.

"I resolved to stay away from the 'Cerebus as Messiah' stories when I was done with this one. It is an aspect of Cerebus' future, but it by no means influences his present actions to any large degree. Issues #5 and 7 were intended as complimentary stories." When Sim wrote that in *Swords of Cerebus* vol. 2, I don't think anyone aside from Sim realized just how major a part of Cerebus' future that would eventually become.

*Cerebus* #8 (Feb.–Mar. 1979) is another story that is important in the future. Cerebus is used by a group of Conniptin conspirators to wrest power from their foppish leader and have Cerebus put in his place. While the plan succeeds, Cerebus isn't pleased to be in charge of a group he thinks are morons. Their ideals sound more cheerleader-ish than menacing: "Might makes right! Might for right! Might for right! Right for Might! Fight, fight, fight!"

While it is common today for fans to have all kinds of access to creators through social media, web pages, and blogs, that wasn't always the case as the Internet is a fairly recent invention. That said, both Dave and Deni maintained a very open presence with the readers in each issue through Deni's "Note from the Publisher," and later, Dave's "Note from the President," as well as in the very lively letters column, "Aardvark Comment." Why this openness with the fans?

"For me, I think it is just in my nature to be open with people, and that includes things like publishing," says Loubert. "The whole idea was because I always found the editorials in magazines to be an interesting insight into the world of publishing and wanted to do the same. I tend to view them today as early blogs, since they have much the same function as a blog would today for a publishing business. Somehow there was always something happening that we felt we wanted to share with our fans."



**DENI LOUBERT**

### CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Issue #10 (June–July 1979) features the return of Red Sophia. She finds Cerebus wandering in the snow after parting from the Conniptins and ropes him into helping her and a couple of others steal a powerful mystical artifact, the Black Blossom Lotus. Cerebus plays against both sides against each other and ends up with the Black Blossom Lotus for himself.

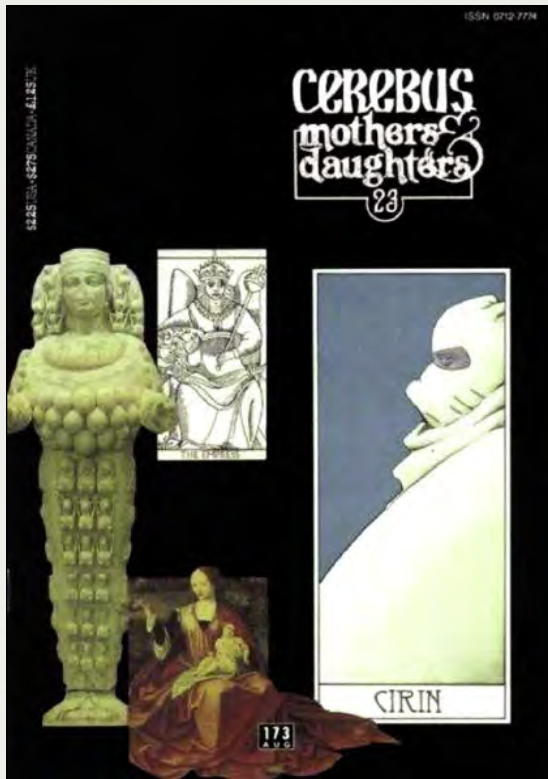
There was an important development for Sim in this issue. "This was also the first issue where I consciously built tension between a number of characters by molding four individual points of view at complete odds with all others," he wrote in the introduction to the story in *Swords of Cerebus* vol. 3. "Very little actually happens in the story, but I was beginning to lose my compulsion to change locales and situations simply for the sake of variety. Instead I was beginning to emphasize the personalities involved. The relationships between the characters became the priority and the framework."

The next two issues introduced a character that was to become another major player in *Cerebus*, and he was partly inspired by Sim meeting artist Marshall Rogers at a comic convention in Toronto. Rogers is fondly remembered for his work on *Batman*, especially his work with writer Steve Englehart in *Detective Comics*.

### Aardvarkian Vigilance

From the Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)) archives, an undated Dave Sim Cerebus illustration in graphite, ink, and fine-line marker on paper. (inset) Cover to *Cerebus* #6 (June–July 1978).

Cerebus TM & © Dave Sim.



### MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS, AND MORE

This leads to the last story that isn't collected in the phonebooks but that you'll find in *Cerebus Number Zero* from *Cerebus* #137–138 (Aug.–Sept. 1990), "Like A Looks." The basis of the story comes from the idea that throughout history, there have been rumors that certain leaders have had doubles that attend public functions in case someone tries to kill them. So why not Lord Julius? If you think a story filled with Lord Julius clones who all think they're the real thing is all kinds of fun, you'd be right.

*Melmoth*, from issues #139–150 (Oct. 1990–Sept. 1991), is another take on Wilde, this time dealing with his death. Looking at the Afterword, you can see how much research Sim put into this story.

On the Cerebus front, the aardvark spends most of his days at a table outside a café, holding the doll Missy and staring blankly into space. This story also sees the return of Mick and Keef as well as the Roach, who is now normalroach, a parody of Jim Valentino's normalman. At the end of the story, Cerebus hears two Cirinists talking about Jaka. She is alive and one of them hurt her. Both the Cirinists are quickly dead as Cerebus has snapped back to reality and is pissed. However, Cirinists seem to know whatever happens to each other, and soon others arrive.

The next big storyline is *Mothers and Daughters*, which begins with *Flight* in issues #151–162 (Oct. 1991–Sept. 1992). The story picks up with Cerebus on a rampage against the Cirinists. He rallies the people to his side, but they don't fare so well. The Roach gets in on the action, too, as Punisheroach, a parody of the Punisher. And then, suddenly, Cerebus disappears.

As the machinations between Cirin, Astoria, and others play out, Cerebus has traveled to another realm where he finally "meets" Suenteus Po, or at least a projection of him. They play a game of chess while Po explains the relevance of many things that have happened and shows Cerebus the results of



some of his actions. When Po wins, he sends Cerebus back to Earth.

This leads into the next part of *Mothers and Daughters, Women*, from issues #163–174 (Oct. 1992–Sept. 1993). The story moves along briskly as Punisheroach morphs into his new identity of Swoon, a parody of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, with Elrod as his "sister," Snuff (Death). Cerebus has moved into a bar, as they are off limits to women, and he'll be safe there.

Cerebus also demonstrates an odd ability. When he's asleep/passed out, he causes the tower of heads (there's another ascension coming) to grow a spire. He makes it snap off and when it falls, it crushes a good portion of the Regency. In addition to all of this, Astoria is preparing for a meeting with Cirin. In the end, she is joined by Cerebus and Suenteus Po, and they go to meet Cirin together.

*Reads*, the next volume in *Mothers and Daughters*, ran from issues #175–186 (Oct. 1993–Sept. 1994) and is probably the most famous—or infamous, depending on your point of view—section of the story. "Reads is a

### Aardvark of Bronze

(left) An innovative mixed-media cover by Sim and Gerhard for *Cerebus* #173 (Aug. 1993). (right) A 1994 team Cerebus collaboration turning our hero into Doc Savage. Courtesy of Heritage.

Cerebus TM & © Dave Sim.  
Doc Savage TM & © Condé Nast.

# ElfQuest™

## Behind the Scenes:

### A Chat with Richard and Wendy Pini

by **Shaun Clancy**  
conducted via email.

*Best wishes to Phil Seuling — one of the good guys!*



*from fantasy's newest sensation —*

# ELFQUEST

In the following interview, you will be privy to a rare glimpse of how the *ElfQuest* series was developed and expanded over a 36-year period. You will learn who the creators are, how the series was born, and what the connection is between *ElfQuest* and *Warp Graphics*. For those readers who are not familiar with the series, I'll include a brief summary below, taken directly from the [www.ElfQuest.com](http://www.ElfQuest.com) authorized website:

*"ElfQuest is the longest-running independent fantasy series, with more than 15 million comics, graphic novels, and other publications in print. The story of Cutter, chief of the Wolfriders, and his quest to find others of their own kind on the World of Two Moons, ElfQuest was first published in 1978 by creators Wendy and Richard Pini. The Wolfriders number only 17 at the outset, but come to know hundreds of other elves, trolls, and humans as the quest unfolds. The latest cycle, The Final Quest, is being published by Dark Horse Comics."*

— Shaun Clancy

**SHAUN CLANCY:** Can we start off the questioning with *Warp Graphics* itself? I'd like to know when it was formed; who were the partners in it? What was the relationship between *Warp Graphics* and *Apple Comics*? Who came up with the name *Warp Graphics*? I also recall a comic book in the 1980s called *Warp*, which had Rich Buckler stories and art ... was that ever a problem?

**RICHARD PINI:** I'll start off and take the questions about *Warp Graphics*.

*Warp Graphics* the company was formed in 1977, once we realized that we were getting serious about trying to publish the embryonic *ElfQuest* comic series. We figured we were going to become involved in all sorts of business relationships not only with other people but with other companies (and especially the IRS). So since I'd often heard it said that incorporating a business is smarter than doing things as individuals, that's the direction we decided to go. In the beginning it was just Wendy and I, as the sole officers of the corporation, and that's how that aspect of it has stayed ever since—even though over the years we grew as a publishing company to the point where we had half-a-dozen fulltime employees and worked with over two-dozen freelancers.

The name was my idea. By now, everyone knows (or should) that it's an acronym made from "Wendy and Richard Pini." It had (and has) a science-fiction-y, kind of edgy sound to it. I thought it was one of the most clever ideas I'd ever had—even though later I realized that my so-called wit would cause our listings to be way at the back of the various distributors' catalogs! In that regard, Dave Sim was far more sly, naming his company "Aardvark-Vanaheim."

**WENDY:** The name "*Warp*" as a co-credit did get used once, a few years before the birth of our company. In the early to mid-1970s, I was providing cover paintings and interior illustrations for well-known science-fiction magazines such as *Galaxy* and *Worlds of If*. For one cover, that appeared in 1974, I needed some airbrushed smoke and clouds, and

### "Fantasy's Newest Sensation"

From the collection of Richard and Wendy Pini, cover art to the con booklet for the 1979 Comic Art Convention in New York City.

ElfQuest TM & © Warp Graphics, Inc.

## Galaxy Quest

Early examples of Wendy's art: (left)

The cover of the digest-sized sci-fi magazine *Galaxy*, for the July 1974 edition.

(right) An alternate cover design, drawn 12" x 17" with mixed-media on paper.

Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

Galaxy © 1974 World Editions.  
Art © Wendy Pini.

since Richard was playing with the airbrush where he worked at the time, he chipped in and added his artistic two cents. I insisted we split the credit, so that unique painting is signed "WaRP."

**RICHARD:** In 1984, after we'd completed the 20-issue "Original Quest," which took the ElfQuest characters to the conclusion of their first big adventure, Wendy needed to take a couple of years off to have hip-reconstruction surgery. And I found myself in the role of publisher without anything to publish. So I began seeking other non-ElfQuest titles to take up the slack. We always knew there would be more ElfQuest coming as soon as Wendy was ready to get back in the saddle, but in the meantime, I didn't want our company's momentum to flag.

By this time, we'd already brought on additional staffers to help with the day-to-day running of the business side of things—Joel Lynn Kopecky (nee Dorkin) was our administrative assistant, and Michael Catron headed up production. By 1986, Wendy was ready to start on the next ElfQuest arc, subtitled "Siege at Blue Mountain."

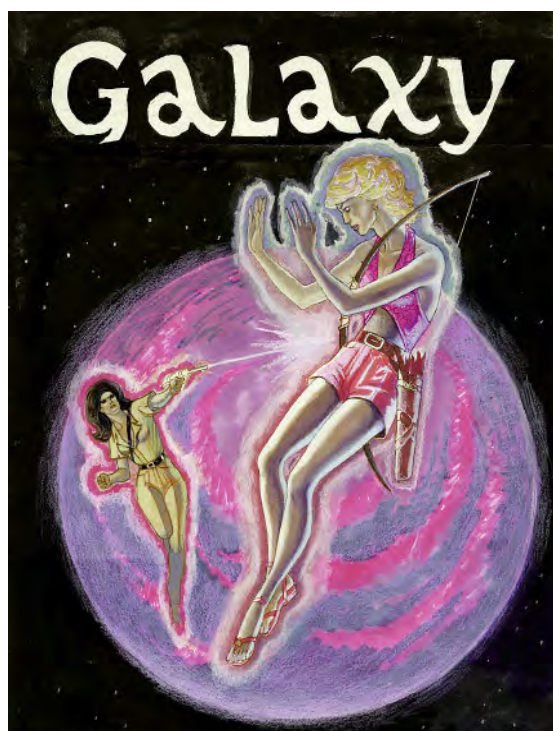
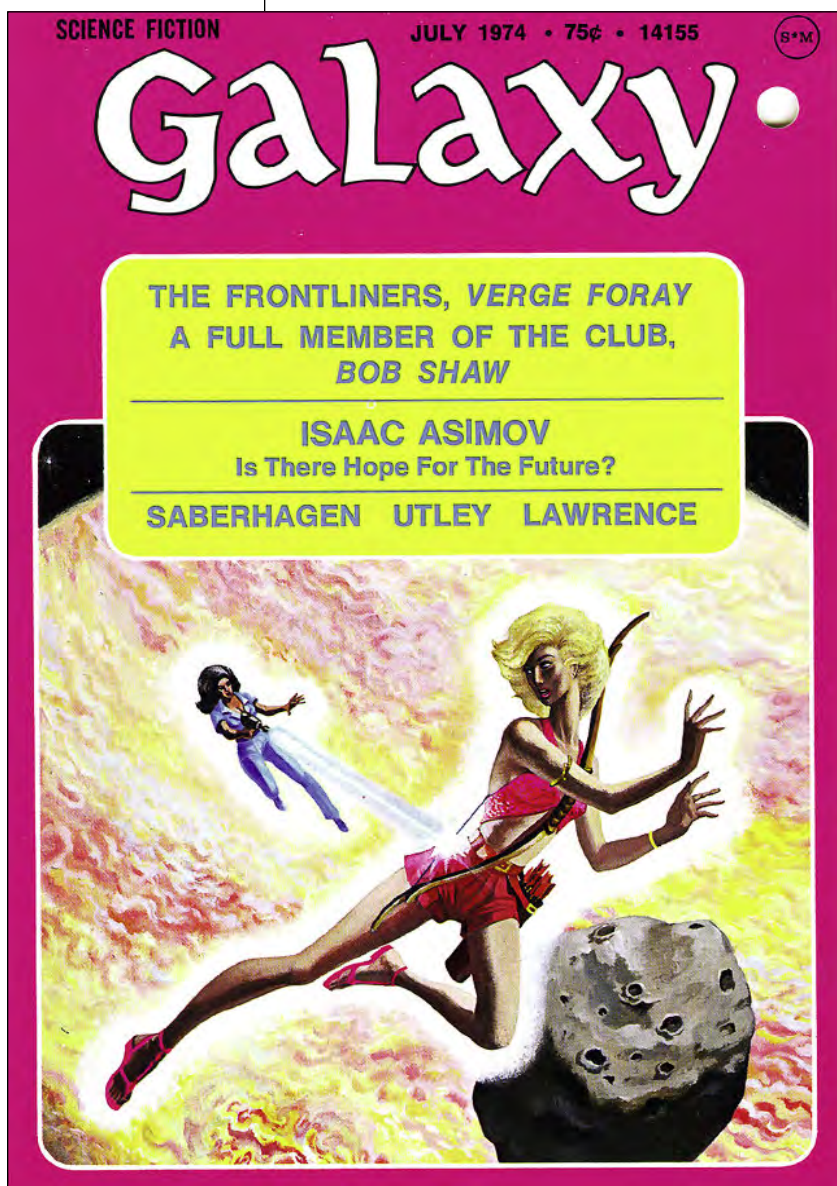
By then, though, she and I were starting to feel the stress of trying both to be creative and to run the business. Mike, who had come to us from a long stint at Fantagraphics, suggested that we and he form a

partnership between Warp Graphics, to provide the art and story, and his nascent publishing company Apple Comics, which would take care of the actual publishing (dealing with printers, distributors, billing, freelancers, etc.). It did take a load off Wendy's and my shoulders, by putting a firewall between us and everything that was draining our creative energies. On the other hand, there were some people whose work we published who, for whatever reasons, didn't get along with the new arrangement, so that added its own stresses. We kept the Warp/Apple partnership in place for as long as it served, maybe half-a-dozen years, and then let it go. Right now, Warp Graphics is back to the basics of how it began, Wendy and Richard Pini.

The *Warp Comics* thing, that was a comic-book series published by First Comics, based on a science-fiction play that [was art directed] by Neal Adams. We had a brief relationship with First (because of Wendy's work on the two *Beauty and the Beast* graphic novels that she wrote and painted, which First published) in the late 1980s. I remember one time Rick Obadiah, the head guy there, joking with us that they were worried about us (Warp Graphics) suing them (for publishing the title "Warp") because we were clearly around much earlier than the play or the associated comic. And even though I thought it mildly odd that some other comic-book entity should be using our company name, I knew even then that there were really no grounds—or reasons—to get upset or bring any kind of action, because a comic-book title and a company name are two very different things in the eyes of the trademark office. Besides, *Warp* the comic is long gone, and we're still here.

**SHAUN:** *Cerebus beat ElfQuest to the stands by a few months. Did you know at the time of publishing ElfQuest that Cerebus was also going to be independently published? Were you in communication with Dave Sim or know of his plans? Did it ever occur to you to try and join forces in publishing?*

**RICHARD:** When we started this project in the spring/summer of 1977, we had no idea anyone else was doing anything like this. Well, that's not strictly speaking





**WENDY:** Back to how I got connected to *Galaxy* ... I was making a name for myself on the art-show convention circuit in the early to mid-1970s, and Jim Baen approached me at some show or other. After a couple of trial illustrations, he asked me to go directly into doing covers. He would send the stories for me to read, but he also had definite editorial suggestions to make about what he wanted to see. It was a give-and-take kind of thing, but his suggestions were helpful in those cases where there was just so much story that it would have been difficult for me to choose which scene to illustrate.

I enjoyed the more fantasy-oriented work over the nuts-and-bolts science-fiction assignments. One of my favorites appeared on the cover to the October 1974 issue of *Worlds of If* (which featured more fantasy, in contrast to *Galaxy's* more SF slant). It's from a Poul Anderson story. This is certainly an elfin-looking precursor to the character of Tyldak, who would show up in *ElfQuest* a few years later!

**SHAUN:** *I do have the June 1974 Worlds of If; this is the illustration you mention as being Wendy's first published art, correct?*

**WENDY:** If it's of a female and a dragon sitting on a hill looking down at some houses in the distance, yes. Very simple, clean linework.

**SHAUN:** *Yes, that's it.*

*You did a great job explaining how you got into the business, Wendy, but not Richard...*

*Being a graduate of MIT, Richard, did that give you a writing background or the courage to attempt being an author? Had you ever written anything professionally before ElfQuest?*

**RICHARD:** Just as Wendy had no formal art training, but learned what she knows by a constant adding to and honing of her natural talents and acquired skills, I sort of fell into the twin roles of writing and running a business. I was a precocious reader; I am told that I was reading the newspaper at age three. Maybe that's just parental pride exaggerating—perhaps I was just reading the comic strips at that age! (Although I do have memories of looking at the purely text pages, too.) I discovered the twin worlds of science-fiction and fantasy via all those wonderful Robert Heinlein and Andre Norton (and many others) juvenile volumes—who of our generation doesn't fondly remember the red-and-yellow rocketship stickers on the spines of those books in the school library? And I devoured that stuff. Reading a lot naturally, it seemed, led to my wanting to try my hand at writing, which I did, copiously, throughout grade school. (I still have some of those stories; they are exquisitely awful, but everyone starts somewhere.)

And other than the occasional story for this or that school newspaper or literary magazine, I don't think either of us had been published professionally prior to *ElfQuest*.

**WENDY:** Don't forget about *Red Sonja*! I got the nod from Roy Thomas to script an issue of [Marvel's] *Red Sonja* comic [#6] in 1976 or 1977, while I was portraying the character along with Frank

Thorne's Wizard for the famous (some would say "infamous") "Sonja and the Wizard" stage show at comics conventions.

**RICHARD:** When I graduated MIT, my first job was as lecturer at the Hayden Planetarium at the Boston Museum of Science, where I quickly discovered that one didn't simply present the star shows, one also participated in the writing of them, and the construction of the special projection effects, and several other tasks. The more I wrote the shows that I would then present, the more I realized that I really enjoyed the dual aspects of creating something and then sharing it with an audience—which naturally would serve later in the co-creation and publication of *ElfQuest*. But as I've already mentioned, I had no business training in any of the diverse aspects of publishing before we more or less just jumped into the deep end of the pool and learned by doing.

**SHAUN:** *Have either of you ever taught before?*

**RICHARD:** I taught high school astronomy for four years, from 1975 to 1979. I went into that job directly from the planetarium position at the Hayden Planetarium, then in 1979 went to work for IBM for a couple of years. If you do the math, I was teaching when *ElfQuest* was born. By 1981, I was faced with a crucial decision, because by then *ElfQuest* had taken off and was becoming a fulltime job for me.

**WENDY:** It already was a fulltime job for me!

**RICHARD:** But I was also working long hours at IBM, so I had to make a choice, and a difficult one, because working for IBM in those days was very secure, very well-paid, and the benefits were unrivaled. Leaving all that to *ElfQuest* was a total leap of faith, but we've never looked back.

**SHAUN:** *Earlier Wendy mentioned the similarities of being adopted, and that of the ElfQuest series' looking for relatives ... have you tried to do this in your own life, and have you succeeded?*

**RICHARD:** Regarding Wendy being adopted, and the search for tribe/family, Wendy's always liked to have a circle of trusted friends nearby. Me, maybe not so much, at least not in the literal sense.

We made the decision early on that we would not have children, as we knew that the creative path we were walking could—and would—take all of our time and attention. It's a choice we've never regretted, but it does open up the potential for different "family" dynamics. We've often considered that all of the people who read *ElfQuest*—especially those who read it when they were young and who have now grown up and become parents who read it to their kids—are our "tribe." There's definitely a kind of bond there. When someone comes up to us at a convention and shares how *ElfQuest* affected them in this way or that, or helped them in some way, we do



### **Epic Retellings**

Wendy's original cover art to Marvel Epic's second issue of *ElfQuest* (Sept. 1985), courtesy of Heritage.

ElfQuest TM & © Warp Graphics, Inc.



feel a bit like—if not “parental,” then perhaps like the tribal elders whose task it is to keep the spirit of community alive.

**SHAUN:** *Where is the ElfQuest saga right now, and what are your plans for the series?*

**WENDY:** Those are very broad questions.

With respect to the actual comic-book/graphic-novel series, we’ve signed a publishing license with Dark Horse Comics. They not only are publishing new *ElfQuest* comics, but reissuing the existing archive editions, plus adding to that collection, plus a bunch of other projects, getting *ElfQuest* back into the spotlight again. They also will make the stories available to apps on all the major online/digital platforms.

We’re working right now on the next big story arc, called *Final Quest*. There have been several of these over the history of *ElfQuest*—the first, we call the “Original Quest,” followed by *Siege at Blue Mountain*, and then *Kings of the Broken Wheel*. These arcs, along with other storylines that have been woven through some of the spin-off titles that we published during the 1990s, have been leading inexorably to a major climax and conclusion. *Final Quest*, while not the literal end of *ElfQuest* storytelling, does tie up all the threads that have been begun

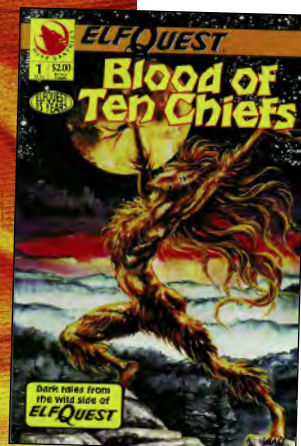
as far back as 1978. The backstory is all there. The hints and foreshadowings are all there. The plan is to tell *Final Quest* in a series of bimonthly comics that will then be collected into volumes, that may be companion volumes to the Archive Editions that DC Comics released from 2003–2007. The first issue of *Final Quest*—actually, it’s more like a prologue special issue [titled *ElfQuest: The Final Quest Special #1—ed.*]—came out in October 2013, and was second in sales [that month] only to Dark Horse’s *Star Wars* comics. I’m really happy about that!

**SHAUN:** *Who handles ElfQuest merchandising? Are there any talks for an animated movie or television series? Have you ever been approached on this idea in the past, shot a pilot, etc.? I can see*

*this series as a computer-animated movie, can’t you?*

**RICHARD:** *ElfQuest* was optioned by Warner Bros. in 2008. They told us they wanted to make a “tentpole” movie out of *ElfQuest*, using the technology that James Cameron pioneered to make *Avatar*. We figured, “That’s great!” There are no technical hurdles that can’t be overcome, and with the right script and director, *ElfQuest* would make a spectacular movie.

But then, after four years of “Hurry up and wait,” Warners said no. It was a disappointment, to be sure, but after a proper period of mourning, Wendy and I decided it was time for some major changes. We let go our agents, with whom we’d worked for a dozen years, and took the reins of *ElfQuest* back into our own hands. For a long time we’d figured that we should let others who seemed more experienced in dealing



### *ElfQuest: B. C. (Before Cutter)*

(left) Wendy’s cover painting for Tor’s 1986 *Blood of Ten Chiefs* short-story collection.

(inset) Artist Janine Johnston launched this 20-issue *ElfQuest* limited series.

ElfQuest TM & © Warp Graphics, Inc.

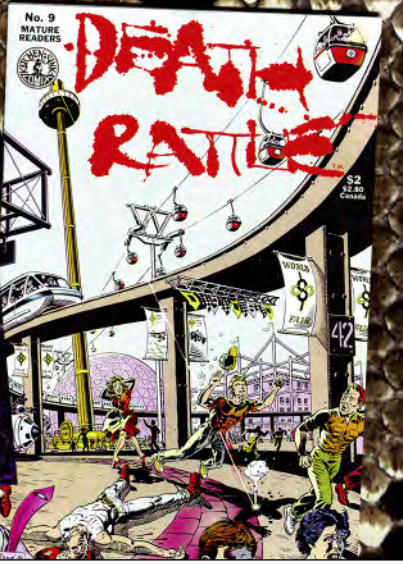


# THERE'S A RATTLER IN YOUR KITCHEN SINK, MAN...

## An overview of Kitchen Sink Press



by **Jerry Boyd**



By the middle of the 1980s, as a reader I was becoming burned out on wonderful people who flew, ran, and swam around in colorful costumes in comics. The New Teen Titans, the All-New X-Men, and their friends and foes were still fun, but less fun than they'd been before. Who'd come to my rescue? It wouldn't be more of these superpowered kids—I knew that. Thankfully, the “hippy kids” over at Kitchen Sink Press would be my rescuers!

Denis Kitchen, publisher and visionary, unleashed a second volume of the horror/sci-fi anthology title *Death Rattle*, and it was one of the best of its type. I took a chance on the first issue, having had a soft spot for these types of endeavors. I loved it! I was saved!

### DEATH RATTLE 101

The 1970s saw the first volume of *Death Rattle*, and it was probably never spotted by many of those who became readers of *DR* in the 1980s. I know I didn't catch it. It was tucked away for the older, longhaired patrons of Bob Sidebottom's Collector Comics in downtown San Jose, California, in 1972. You had to be 18 or older to skim through the underground comix shelves that Bob had—and he was strict with his rules, also. We pre-teens had to content ourselves with the majors. *DR* #1 (July 1972) sported a beautifully painted cover and an interior scary-old-house-with-a-weird-resident tale by Rich Corben. There were two more issues. The title shook, rattled, rolled, and died off.

By 1983, Warren Publishing had gone quietly out of business. Marvel's horror heroes and heroines had overstayed their welcome, and Pacific Comics' *Alien Worlds* and *Twisted Tales*, though extraordinary, weren't exactly taking over the comic world. DC and Charlton's sci-fi and horror books were either gone or were preparing to fold. To be fair, the possibilities of the genres seemed tapped out creatively ... like so many vampires' victims.

But then *Death Rattle* #1 (Oct. 1985) appeared! This time I was old enough for this exciting fusion of the underground horror and alternative comics. I put this question to Mr. Kitchen, the publisher: *What made you decide the 1980s was the right time to revive Death Rattle, and what was different about your vision for the title this time around as opposed to the book you did for the '70s?* His response was, “The comics market has traditionally gone through periods of expansion and contraction. These trends are hard for independent companies, like Kitchen Sink, to ride, given the inherent lack of capital, small staffs, and such. I restarted *Death Rattle* [vol. 2] in the '80s because there was a rapid growth in comics and an opportunity to do full-color comics, something almost unthinkable in the '70s. I had a much deeper Rolodex of artists by then, a larger staff capable of doing the color production work, and felt bullish about the market. I'm still very proud of those color issues—I hated that we had to revert back to black and white, but we tried to make the best of it.”

What made *Death Rattle* special? To me, it was a simple but great realization of what real “terror” is. Denis and *DR*'s story editor, Dave Schreiner, made note of the fundamental teachings of Al Feldstein's “preachies” (stories with socio-political matters) in EC Comics' *Shock Suspenstories* and that was *man's inhumanity to man* is our world's greatest horror. From their earliest issues, *DR* promised terror tales of madness, obsession, decapitations, and slithering otherworldly unknowns interacting with humans with lots of neuroses. *DR*, its only mascot a coiled rattlesnake, wouldn't even attempt to offer its readership the finest vampire, werewolf, living mummy, witch, or zombie imaginings put to paper. Instead, its contents (magnificently colored from #1–5 by Bill Poplaski, Ray Fehrenbach, Meg Schwemmer, and Mike Newhall) served up equal portions of death-obsessed natives and settlers, road kill-devouring rural crazies, shape-shifting man-killing monsters, and maniacal killers (more on the latter later).

### Dapper Denis

(top) Denis Kitchen, all stylin', back in the Big '80s. Photo courtesy of Denis and Stacey Kitchen.

(bottom) A 1974 Rand Holmes self-portrait courtesy of Patrick Rosenkranz, whose Fantagraphics book about Rand's life and artwork is just superb!



MIKE BARON



Mike Baron became one of *DR's* most-praised writers. He concurs with the above. Mike notes, "I don't know what Denis' vision was other than provide good stories, but *Death Rattle* had much more modern stories than *Creepy* and *Eerie*. At the time, *Creepy* and *Eerie* were still hung up on fairly stale shock endings where someone turns out to be a vampire or a werewolf. *Death Rattle* went way beyond that."

*DR* #1 gave us a short, factual account of a settler whose father had been killed by Delaware Indians before his eyes. Traumatized, he made it his life's ambition to kill as many natives of the region as we could, even begging friends to deliver one more to his deathbed to round out the number to an even hundred. *Unsettling stuff, man....*

Charles Burns, an up-and-coming writer-artist, chimed in with a story about insect infestation/inhabitation that has to be read to be believed ... and then read again! Leading off these wonderfully bizarre yarns was a sci-fi reprint by Rand Holmes, one of the best but underappreciated talents from the '70s counter-culture. Rand was to become of the *Rattle-fest's* star artists. *DR* was on its way.

### HOLMES, JACKSON, AND BARON

Denis was savvy enough to recruit two of the most talented artists from the underground era—Jack "Jaxon" Jackson and Rand Holmes. Writer Mike Baron would come in with the fourth issue. About Jaxon, Kitchen observes, "I thought Jack was a terrific storyteller. I love the fact that later in his career he drew primarily from historical sources. His 'God's Bosom' in vol. 2, #2 remains, for me, one of the most horrific stories ever. I also liked that our natural sympathy for native peoples is turned on its head and we see the Spaniards being the tormented and tortured ones. That was part of the undergrounds: comics told and depicted from different perspectives and uncensored. Likewise, I encouraged his serialized *Bulto* because of its compelling combination of history and fiction. Later, KSP collected that as *The Secret of San Saba*."

"God's Bosom" was the highlight of the second issue (Dec. 1985), and Peter Poplaski, KSP's art director, drew a cover scenario of it that set the mood for *DR's* direction—man's inhumanity to man. Spanish missionaries, noblewomen, and some defenders are cast ashore after their ship flounders. The area that they find themselves in is filled with hostile natives who degrade, taunt, and kill many of them in a slow-running and heartless game of cat and mouse. Also in that memorable issue was work by Will Eisner, who (appropriately) let the Spirit relate short accounts of true ghost sightings. Another Holmes reprint, "The Artist Himself," looked at the humorous travails of the writer/cartoonist. I loved it, but it was just the second issue! Wasn't it a little early on to let an artist do a piece on himself? It turned out (I'd find out much later) that it came from *Fog City Comics* #2 back in the '70s. Kitchen and Schreiner, it seems, were testing the waters. However, Kitchen (luckily for his readers) had been seeking new work by Rand. He says, "I absolutely thought Holmes was one of the finest draftsmen and most imaginative artists out there. I couldn't think of anyone better to spearhead a new horror series. It wasn't easy to recruit him, though; he required a higher rate than I budgeted, and he was in the middle of building

# Pacific Comics

## Memories

by David Scroggy



### The Home of Pacific Comics

Circa 1981, the staff of Pacific Comics in their then-new digs: (left to right) Bill Schanes, president and co-publisher; David Scroggy, editorial director; and Steve Schanes, art director and co-publisher. (The sign painter at right, in the '80s short-shorts, is unidentified.) Photo by Jackie Estrada; originally published in the 1998 book *Comics: Between the Panels* by Steve Duin and Mike Richardson.

*When I moved with my fellow Akronite Jon Hartz from Ohio to San Diego in the winter of 1975, it was with a vague notion of getting involved in comics somehow.* In those days, San Diego was about as far from mainstream comics publishing as you could get and still be in the country, so the fact that I actually did get involved in the industry is remarkable.

A volunteer job with the fledgling San Diego Comic-Con led to a column in *Comics Buyer's Guide*, and those two credentials landed me a job at [retailer] Pacific Comics, who was at that time expanding from one comics shop to two.

One thing led to another, and almost before I knew what was going on, Pacific launched into their initial foray into direct-sales distribution, opening the door for others to compete with Phil Seuling in wholesaling comic books to the newly forming network of specialty comic-book stores.

Although it seems hard to imagine today, one of the big problems comic-book stores had in those days was getting a reliable supply of new comic books. Distribution of comics, as with other dated periodicals, was controlled by the newsstand wholesaler network. Sometimes the principals were pretty shady characters. To these companies, comics were a nuisance business. The distributors seldom kept track of the titles, let alone the issue number, and did not care much about the condition of the books. The price point of comics, deemed to have an audience solely of children, had been kept low for decades. Cover prices had not kept pace with those of other magazines, so comics were hardly worth carrying for either distributor or retailer. Often, new titles were not even put out for sale, but pulped or sold out the back door without ever leaving the warehouse.

Phil Seuling, an energetic dealer and entrepreneur from Brooklyn, had approached the New York publishers with an offer: he would buy and sell comic books on a non-returnable basis and serve these collector shops. The publishers had nothing to lose, and Seuling could be described as persuasive; the direct-sales market was born. Shops had a steady supply source, and fans knew that these stores would have all the new comics on a weekly basis. The entire market's output was paltry by today's standards, but then as now the comic-book readers were loyal and enthusiastic.

A number of related items also became viable by utilizing this emerging distribution channel: fanzines, limited-edition prints, and fantasy-art portfolios all found a wider audience among true fans. Pacific, who had by then shed their retail stores and back-issue mail-order businesses in favor of distributing, got active in this area. They began publishing limited-edition portfolios of fantasy art and comic-related art. Generally consisting of six to ten individual illustration plates in an illustrated folder, signed and numbered by the artist, these joined the comic books as part of the product mix.

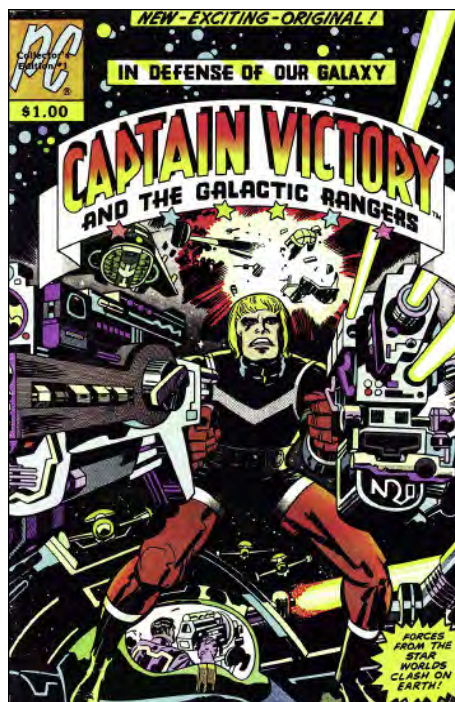
It wasn't long before the owners of Pacific Comics, Bill and Steve Schanes, had an epiphany: they could publish their own comic books and plug into this new distribution network. Work conditions for comics creators were oppressive; talents like Jack Kirby and Neal Adams had quit comic books and sought other commercial-art venues, but the Schanes brothers thought that if they gave these creators ownership of their work, and paid on a royalty basis, they could entice them into creating new books for Pacific.

That began a dynamic little adventure. In retrospect, it was akin to being strapped onto a skyrocket. But it was us passengers,

## Pacific Premiere

(top) Pacific Comics' first title, Jack Kirby's *Captain Victory and the Galactic Rangers* #1 (Nov. 1981). Inks by Mike Royer, colors by Steve Oliff. (center and bottom left) That comic's last page featured this editorial by David Scroggy, and this teaser for the next issue. (bottom right) Bruce Jones, David Scroggy, and Jones' wife April Campbell review an issue of Bruce's *Twisted Tales* comic in the Pacific offices. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of David Scroggy.

Captain Victory TM & © The Jack Kirby Estate.



## CAPTAIN VICTORY!

First issues of major publications have always been prized by collectors. The comic you hold in your hands is more than just the first issue of an exciting new adventure series, *Captain Victory and the Galactic Rangers*. It is the first publication of a new comic-book publisher: Pacific Comics. We are planning on an ongoing schedule, and will be here for years to come. Our initial publishing schedule is small in quantity (one comic per month), but certainly long on quality.

It is fitting that our premiere title is the creation of Jack Kirby. Over the years, Kirby has fashioned the visual images of literally thousands of characters. In *Captain Victory*, he has brought his years of experience and creative talents into full play, breathing life into an innovative series as bold as tomorrow. We will be introducing another groundbreaking new series very soon—*Starslayer* by Mike Grell. Each title will be published on a regular bimonthly schedule. And there are other big plans afoot as well. Watch for them!

We love comics. It is our feeling that there are not enough quality books being produced for the discriminating fan. We are marketing our comics through the direct-sales market only. This means that they will probably not be found on regular newsstands, but mainly in specialty shops, such as comic-book and science-fiction book stores. We have added a listing of many fine outlets that carry *Captain Victory*. If your favorite shop is not listed, please send us their name and address. We hope you enjoy this project: it's for you!

David Scroggy, Editor



Letters Page  
Next Issue

Please send your  
comments to:

### "Voices of Victory"

**DAVID SCROGGY**

Editor

c/o Pacific Comics  
4887 Ronson Court  
Suite E  
San Diego, CA 92111

fingers crossed, that were lighting the fuse. And away we went!

I became the editorial director at Pacific, who had by now split their business into two parts: distribution and publishing. Beginning with *Captain Victory* from the great Jack Kirby, it was astonishing how positive the responses to our inquiries were. Top creators had been waiting for an opportunity like this for quite awhile, and many of them leapt at the chance to bring forward characters they would actually own.

Other creators came to the fore. One of DC Comics' star artists, Mike Grell, enthusiastically embraced the plan and, in what was big news at the time, came from DC to PC with a new series called *Starslayer*. Our longtime Comic-Con pal, the beloved *MAD* Magazine marginal maniac Sergio Aragonés, said he had been keeping a character called Groo under wraps for years. He would not give away the ownership to a publisher, but with the Pacific deal, the time seemed right to unleash this clumsy barbarian on an unsuspecting reading public. Did we err? I don't think so, since *Groo* is still around today even though several of his erstwhile publishers are not.

Even industry superstar Neal Adams jumped on board. Besides being one of comics' most innovative and popular artists, Adams had been a relentless crusader for creators' rights. He worked to expose the unfair and precarious financial situation that Superman co-creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were in, while their creation churned out revenue nonstop. Neal helped to publicize this, and the effort shamed DC and parent Warner Bros. into acknowledging Superman's creators with a modest annuity, health benefits, and the return of their names in the credits. After a negotiation with the Schanes brothers, terms were reached and work began behind-the-scenes on Adams' *Ms. Mystic* title and a Continuity Associates-packaged anthology title.

Early in this process of lining up talent for Pacific Comics, I found myself dialing the great Steve Ditko on the telephone. We already had Jack Kirby and Neal Adams doing projects for us—why not Ditko as well? We'd be like Marvel all over again! I reached him, and, probably in a voice littered with stammers and goosh, did my best to explain what we were attempting to do. Mr. Ditko heard me out, and said that he thought it sounded like a good idea, and said he would put some thoughts on paper and send them to me.

I was like a kid waiting for Christmas. Which eventually came in the form of a manila envelope liberally festooned with "air mail special delivery" stamps. The sender was Steve Ditko in New York.



# STONE SKIN, HUMAN HEART:

PAUL CHADWICK'S

# Concrete®

by Alex Boney



PAUL CHADWICK

Photo by Joshin Yamada.

By almost any measure, 1986 was a landmark year in the comics industry. Led by comic books like *Cerebus* and *Love and Rockets* and alternative comics publishers such as Fantagraphics and Kitchen Sink, a black-and-white comics revolution had been building gradually throughout the 1980s. This growth led to a veritable black-and-white boom after *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was published in 1984. Even the “Big Two” publishers—Marvel and DC—were trying to adapt to a marketplace that had been dramatically changed by the direct-market sales model. Marvel’s Epic imprint, launched in 1982, allowed creators to experiment with nontraditional, mature stories beyond the confines of superheroes. DC began hiring British talent to revitalize some of its obscure properties (*Swamp Thing*) and create original content (*Camelot 3000*) before letting established writers and artists experiment with new ideas (*Ronin*) and completely remake their superhero universe (*Crisis on Infinite Earths*).

All of these developments came to a head in 1986—a pivotal year that saw the publication of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, *Watchmen*, *The Man of Steel*, Marvel’s New Universe imprint, the Superman epic *Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?*, and new Alan Moore *Miracleman* stories from Eclipse. Nineteen-eighty-six wasn’t just a banner year for superhero comics, though. It was the year that Pantheon published the first collection of Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus*. And it was also the year that publisher Mike Richardson founded Dark Horse Comics and launched the anthology series *Dark Horse Presents*.

The breakout feature of *DHP*, Paul Chadwick’s “Concrete,” presented the story of a former political speechwriter who finds himself trapped in a huge, stone body imbued with superhuman abilities. The premise makes “Concrete” sound like a superhero story—a black-and-white twist on the Fantastic Four’s Ben Grimm—but it was actually a character study about a man trying to figure out who he was and how he fit into a world full of new possibilities. It was a book about quiet moments and ordinary problems and contemplation. It tackled social issues such as conservation, overpopulation, and celebrity. At a time when new genres were being created and existing genres were being dramatically reimagined, *Concrete* still managed to stand out as an important book very much in and of its time.

## LITTLE PUSHES

Although Chadwick is best known for his work on *Concrete*, he got his professional start as a storyboard illustrator. After graduating from Art Center College of Design in California, Chadwick did storyboard work on projects such as *Strange Brew*, *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure*, and *Evoks: The Battle for Endor*. In 1985, he was hired by Marvel to illustrate writer Archie Goodwin’s brief run on *Dazzler*. When Chadwick started working in the comics industry, he began to tease out and develop an original concept of his own.

Concrete TM & © Paul Chadwick.

## Brief Stay in the House of Ideas

Two original art examples of Paul Chadwick art (with inks by Jackson Guice) from Archie Goodwin's brief stint on *Dazzler*: (left) page 17 of issue #38 (July 1985), featuring an X-Men appearance, and (right) cover art for the title's penultimate issue, #41. Courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions ([www.ha.com](http://www.ha.com)).

TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Chadwick originally planned *Concrete* to be a standalone series. While he was putting together a formal proposal for the book, Mike Richardson offered to publish a short story in *Dark Horse Presents*, an anthology comic with which he was launching his new company. Chadwick initially didn't want to work in the short-story format, but he changed his mind and began contributing stories regularly to *DHP* (which was published bimonthly).

In the editorial column for *Dark Horse Presents* #1, editor Randy Stradley said that Dark Horse's mission was to create "an atmosphere where an artist, or a group of artists, can feel free to experiment; to push at their own boundaries—and at the boundaries of the comics medium." In a sense, this proved to be the case for Chadwick: "In a couple of ways I remember, that was true," Chadwick says. "First was their flagship book, *Dark Horse Presents*, which functioned as a tryout venue for series that might later have their own book. It was a great discipline to do an eight-page story about your character. It shook you out of the start-with-the-origin rut. It was also a home for arty and offbeat stories that otherwise weren't very marketable. I remember a strip that Eric Shanower drew—a period crime story about

kids of military personnel stationed at Guantanamo in the '60s. A couple of young teens murder a girl. It was grim and tragic, not escapist fun, and too full of specific detail not to be something the author must have seen unfold when he was a kid there at the time. Not exactly commercial fare.

"They let you do things your way. *Concrete* had been accepted by Epic, too, but something made me hesitate," Chadwick admits. "I was intent

on starting each issue of *Concrete* with a paragraph entitled 'For the New Reader.' Just that phrase lets you know that you'll be up to speed, not confusedly stumbling into an ongoing story without knowing the significance of things. But Archie Goodwin, bless his soul, said, 'We'll show you how to incorporate that into the dialogue at the beginning of the story.' That's how Marvel did it, and it worked well for them. But I didn't want to do it that way. And I wanted to do back covers for the comic, not have ads there. Things like

that. It was all okay with Dark Horse.

"Mike Richardson has a creator-friendly mindset generally, in part I think because that might've been his path if he hadn't been so talented as a businessman. His earliest dream was to have a comic-book store



MIKE RICHARDSON





notebook long before I'd thought of Concrete, or of Maureen (who imagines those things in the story). The larger too-bad-we-only-act-in-crises idea was a way to make it into a story with a point.

"Write down every idea. You never know when you might use it."

### STRANGE ARMOR

In fact, Chadwick is a creator who continually returns to his stories in an attempt to get them right. In *Land and Sea*, he returned to *Concrete* #1–2 and added material to flesh out Concrete's early adventures. His rationale at the time was understandable. As he wrote in the Note from the Author, "It's funny, but I've always been comfortable with the eight (and sometimes six) pages allotted to me for Concrete's stories in *Dark Horse Presents*. Yet for Concrete's own book, twenty-six or twenty-eight pages has never seemed enough. I've always felt pressed to move the story along faster than I'd like. This sometimes leads to a density of event and characterization which I value, but it also denies me the chance to do things I want to do. For example, opportunities present themselves in stories for striking visuals that don't advance the plot, but would be lovely and rewarding anyway. When I'm pressed for space, these are the first to go. There are other things, too. I have often played things pretty broadly to establish characters in a hurry, rather than work out the indirect subtleties employed by really fine drama. Always, space restrictions

press. But perhaps most galling I've had to quickly pass over ideas and situations I'd really like to savor, to turn over and examine, so to make the reader really feel what's going on, not just register it."

Eight years later, Chadwick again returned to one of his earliest stories in an attempt to tell it in a more complete, compelling way. In 1997–1998, Dark Horse published *Concrete: Strange Armor*, a five-issue miniseries that expanded and elaborated on the origin story he first told in *Concrete* #3–4. *Strange Armor* lingers longer on some of the details that eventually became a major part of Ron's motivation in the larger *Concrete* narrative: the emotional impact of his divorce, his reaction to his new form, and his childhood fascination with stories of adventure and exploration.

In his Author's Forum in *Strange Armor* #1, Chadwick provided context for his latest update: "Concrete is twelve this year. Since it took about three years to get into print he's been with me a good fifteen or sixteen years. Retelling his origin has made me look back to those early days, when my plans were inchoate and each new idea seemed a lightning bolt from the sky to me."

Later in the same column, Chadwick explained that several of the details of *Concrete* and his supporting cast were pulled from his own experiences: "So many elements of *Concrete* came from my life. I think this helped it overcome its deficiencies in writing and art to achieve a sort of clunky charm. It seemed personal, unpolished, exuberant.... Why did I make Ron Lithgow

### More Secret Origins

Chadwick revisited Ron Lithgow's origin story beginning in late 1997 with *Strange Armor*, an expanded version of *Concrete* #3–4. (left) *Strange Armor* #1's page 1, and (right) nighttime tranquility with *Concrete* and Maureen, from the back cover of *Strange Armor* #3.

Concrete TM & © Paul Chadwick.



Every comics fan worth his salt knows that superhero, war, romance, Western, and horror comics were popular during the '50s. But there is one genre most forget: the reader-participation comic.

Reader-participation comics ran and credited reader designs within their pages. Atlas Comics (formerly Timely, later Marvel) alone produced the reader-participation series *Miss America*, *My Girl Pearl*, and *My Friend Irma*, as well as *Patsy Walker* and *Millie the Model* and their many spin-off titles during the '50s and '60s.

## KEEN(E) BEGINNING

The queen of reader participation resided at Archie Comics, however. *Katy Keene* was a wonderful comic that followed the adventures of its pinup model/movie-starlet heroine while publishing reader designs of every possibility. Clothes, cars, homes, and even spaceships all appeared within the pages of *Katy Keene*. Unlike the Atlas comics, which tended to remain unchanging, *Katy Keene* documented every fad that came along, from sack dresses to *MAD Magazine*. Even Katy's look changed through the years. She began looking like Hedy Lamarr and ended looking more like Audrey Hepburn. During a phase in the '50s, she more than resembled real-life pinup queen Bettie Page. (Coincidence? I prefer to think not.)

Sadly, Katy Keene's career didn't last forever. After appearing in nearly every title published by Archie Comics, and starring in many spin-off books, the Katy Keene feature was canceled. Fortunately, this was not the end of the story.

Enter Craig Leavitt.

Craig Leavitt was one of the many contributors to *Katy Keene* who refused to let go of his heroine. In the early '80s, he began to reach out to fellow *Katy Keene* fans and he publicized Katy's cause. Thanks to Leavitt, articles appeared in newspapers and magazines. Katy bits began to appear regularly in cat yronwode's *Fit to Print* column. Leavitt even managed to get Katy Keene cover-featured on the 14th edition of Robert M. Overstreet's *The Comic Book Price Guide* in 1984. After all the attention, *Katy Keene* was revived by Archie Comics.

Leavitt's accomplishments didn't end there, however. He published *Katy Keene* fanzines and even hosted *Katy Con 1*, a birthday celebration for *Katy Keene*'s creator, Bill Woggon. Present along with the birthday boy were [DC Comics' "human encyclopedia"] E. Nelson Bridwell (who was, believe it or not, a *Katy Keene* contributor), Barb Rausch (another *Katy Keene* contributor and future Bill Woggon collaborator for *Vicky Valentine*), and John S. Lucas, the man who would draw Katy's adventures in the '80s. Also present were *Spider-Woman*'s Steve Leialoha and underground comix legend Trina Robbins.

As Robbins explains, "I read *Katy Keene* as a girl, and I loved it, but I never sent in designs, because I didn't realize Bill Woggon redrew all the designs. I thought they were printed exactly as drawn by the contributors, and I knew I could never be as good as them. I was delighted when the *Katy Keene* movement started and she was revived! Bill Woggon was such a sweet guy! And out of that revival grew my friendship with Barb Rausch, now sorely missed." (Rausch died in 2001.)



TRINA ROBBINS

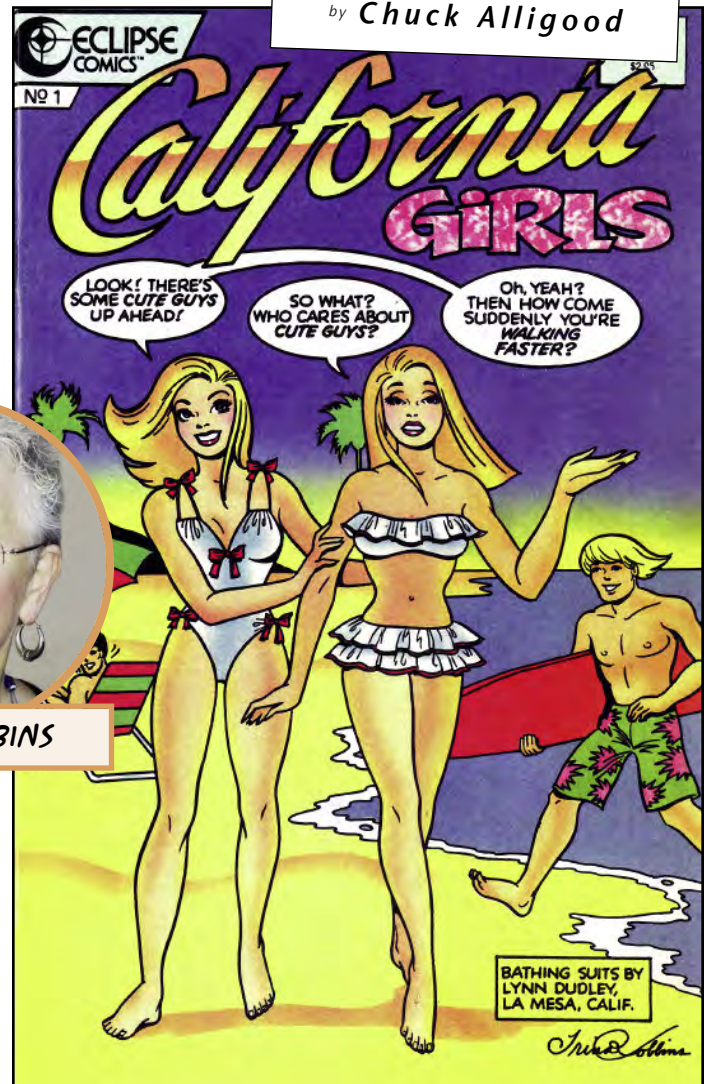
### Double Your Pleasure

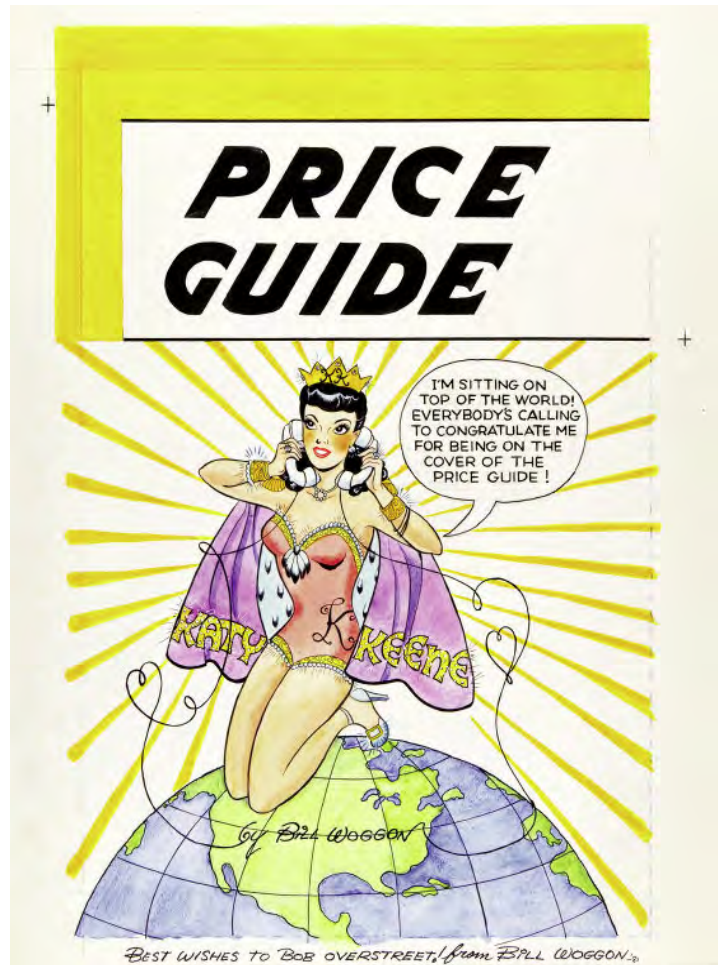
Identical twins Max and Mo premiere in *California Girls* #1 (June 1987).

TM & © Trina Robbins.

# Katy, Trina, and the California GIRLS

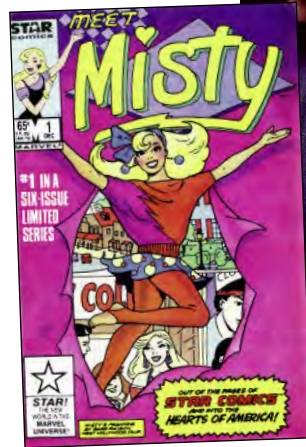
by Chuck Alligood





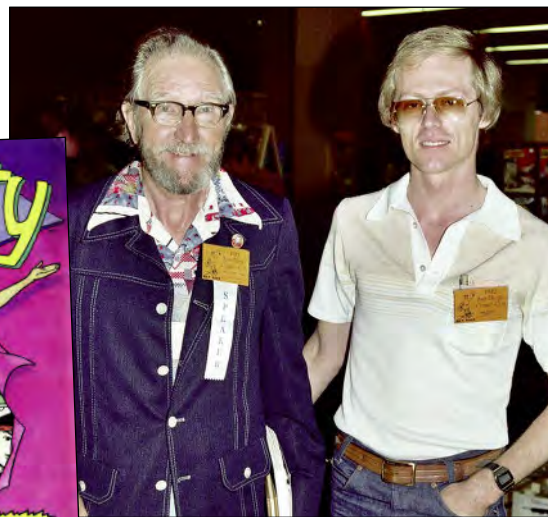
### MISTY-EYED MEMORIES

Something about the event must have stuck with Robbins, because a few short years later she produced her own reader-participation comic for Marvel's Star Comics line: *Meet Misty*. *Meet Misty* #1 (Dec. 1985) introduced the adventures of teenager Misty, her friends, her dad, and her Aunt Millie. Of particular interest was Aunt Millie, better known as Millie Collins. Yes, Aunt Millie was Atlas and Marvel Comics' Millie the Model, no longer a glamour girl, but now a rather dowdy maternal figure. "This was when Jim Shooter was still editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics," explains Robbins. "Luckily, Jim had actually started at Marvel as a writer for *Millie the Model*, so he 'got' what I was trying to do and gave me a six-issue miniseries."



TM & © Trina Robbins.

Of course, as previously mentioned, Aunt Millie wasn't the only cast member of *Meet Misty*. There was the title heroine, a perky blonde who was pursuing a career in show business; Shirelle, an African-American girl who clearly showed the most sense of them all; punk rocker Spike; and Darlene, a spoiled rich girl who bore a striking resemblance to Lucy Ricardo. [Editor's note: For a look at Marvel's Star Comics imprint, come back in two issues for *BACK ISSUE* #77.]



The real star of *Meet Misty* was Robbins herself, however. She had been drawing underground comix for years, but her sleek style was far better suited for a children's comic. Her writing adjusted to appeal to a Star Comics reader: sweet, warm, and yet very smart. In 1985, Trina told *The Comics Buyers' Guide* that *Meet Misty* showed Robbins her calling. Anyone who read the book had to agree.

So went the plot of one story from issue #5 (Aug. 1986): Misty and Darlene accidentally exchanged shorts while dressing for gym class. Naturally, neither girl's shorts fit the other, which led each one to conclude

### Paper Doll

Two pieces of Bill Woggon original art, courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions: (top left) from 1960's *Katy Keene Pin-Up Parade* #10, and (top right) the *Comic Book Price Guide* cover art, signed to Bob Overstreet. (bottom) From San Diego Comic-Con 1982, *Katy Keene* creator Bill Woggon (at left) with *Comics Buyer's Guide's* Alan Light. Photo courtesy of Alan Light.

Katy Keene TM & © Archie Comics.



# 1980s

## INDEPENDENTS: FROM PRINT TO SCREEN

Comic books have taken Hollywood by storm as of late, especially characters from Marvel and DC Comics. But since the 1980s, studios and networks have taken a serious look at independent comics as a source of material for film and television, both for the adult audience as well as the youth audience.

A recent example is Image Comics' *The Walking Dead*, which began modestly enough as a comic, but quickly built a loyal following and has now become one of the most successful independent comic books of all time—and a highly rated cable television show on AMC.

Perhaps the biggest success story of a small, independent comic going mainstream and turning not only into a reliable hit, but a huge phenomenon, is *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, which is as close to being the model of the American success story as one can get. Starting in 1984 as a black-and-white comic and steadily building a strong following, *Turtles* became an entertainment and licensing phenomenon that is still going strong today.

Here are a few independent comics from the 1980s that successfully made the leap from comic books to film or television...

### BUCKY O'HARE

First Appearance: *Echo of Futurepast* #1 (1984, Continuity Associates)

The co-creation of Larry Hama, Michael Golden, and Neal Adams, "funny animal" rabbit/space explorer Bucky O'Hare was originally seen in the first six issues of Continuity Associates' *Echo of Futurepast* anthology.

A 1986 *Bucky O'Hare* graphic novel from Continuity reprinting the *Echo* stories caught the attention of toy developer and production company Abrams Gentile Entertainment. After some initial development by Abrams Gentile, with a lot of input from Neal Adams and his staff, the collaborators approached Sunbow Productions, then a very successful children's television production company (and a subsidiary of advertising agency Griffin-Bacal). Sunbow was known as the programming arm of shows connected to Hasbro Toys, such as *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*. Since Griffin-Bacal was also Hasbro's advertising agency at the time, Sunbow and Abrams/Gentile brought in Hasbro on the deal for a toy line based on *Bucky*.

In September 1991, *Bucky O'Hare and The Toad Wars* was launched in syndication. Produced by Sunbow and French animation house IDDH, with Abrams/Gentile and Continuity as co-producers, one season of 13 episodes was released. Jason Michas provided the voice of Bucky O'Hare.

Despite the proud efforts of all involved, the show never did become a big hit, but it at least got some attention, both domestically on television and internationally, and gave Continuity the distinction of being able to boast that a property that they created from scratch made it to television.



by Stuart Fischer



## CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS

First Appearance:  
*Xenozoic Tales* #1  
 (Feb. 1987, Kitchen  
 Sink Press)



*Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*, the creation of writer/artist Mark Schulz, employs the out-of-time/out-of-place concept (not unlike Marvel's *Howard the Duck*)—and *nothing* is as out-of-time or as out-of-place as a hip, young fellow driving around in a bright-colored Cadillac in the Prehistoric era, surrounded by dinosaurs and cave people!

Schulz's mature concept was not really meant for children, although interestingly, it was that audience that *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* eventually found itself entertaining.

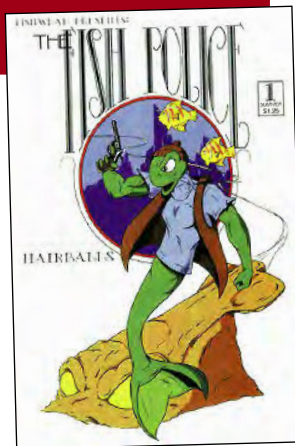
Steven E. deSousa, a major motion picture producer and writer best known for the *Die Hard* movies, saw great potential in Schulz's comic book and developed it as a TV show. Produced by animation studio Nelvana, then a major supplier of television cartoons, *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*, the animated series, ran from September 18, 1993 to March 11, 1994 on the CBS Saturday morning schedule, with a total of 13 episodes created. The show was loyal to Mark Schulz's concept and was nicely animated.

Main characters Jack Tenrac and Hannah Dundee, sort of an Adam and Eve caught in a post-apocalyptic world they never made, were voiced by David Keeley and Susan Roman. Despite wild adventures and the presence of dinosaurs, the show did not last very long.

*Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* did enjoy a period of popularity in comics in the early to mid-1990s, with Schulz's Kitchen Sink material eventually being published, in color, by Marvel's Epic imprint. In 1994, Topps Comics published nine issues of *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* with story and art by a variety of creators.

## FISH POLICE

First Appearance: *Fish Police* #1 (June 1985, Fishwrap Productions)



One of the most original and intelligent comic-book creations of the 1980s, *Fish Police* was self-published by cartoonist Steve Moncuse's Fishwrap Productions. The hero of this offbeat comic was Inspector Gil, a determined detective embarking upon mysteries reminiscent of 1940s noir movies.

In 1989 or 1990, *Fish Police* caught the attention of Batfilm Productions, the production company that produced the *Batman* motion pictures beginning in 1989 and continuing to this day in

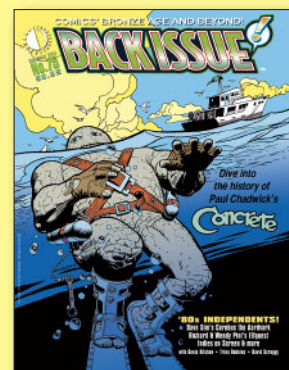
## Modern Masters

(top) Mimi LaFloo, from the *Bucky O'Hare* cast, by Michael Golden. Courtesy of Anthony Snyder. (bottom) A signed-and-numbered *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* print by Mark Schultz. Courtesy of Heritage.

Bucky O'Hare TM & © Continuity Associates. Cadillacs and Dinosaurs TM & © Mark Schultz.



**IF YOU ENJOYED THIS PREVIEW, CLICK THE LINK TO ORDER THIS ISSUE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL FORMAT!**



### BACK ISSUE #75

"'80s Independents!" In-depth looks at PAUL CHADWICK's *Concrete*. DAVE SIM's *Cerebus the Aardvark*, and RICHARD AND WENDY PINI's *Elfquest*! Plus see '80s independent comics go Hollywood, DAVID SCROGGY remembers Pacific Comics, TRINA ROBBINS' *California Girls*, and DENIS KITCHEN's star-studded horror/sci-fi anthology *Death Rattle*. Cover by PAUL CHADWICK!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
 (Digital Edition) \$3.95

[http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&products\\_id=1126](http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=1126)

